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DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

IN CHARGE OF

ISABEL M. STEWART, R.N.

EXTENSION OF THE DEPARTMENT OF NURSING EDUCATION

The problems relating to nurses' education have multiplied so in recent years, that it has been quite impossible in our limited space to more than touch on a few of the most important of them from month to month. With so many vital questions coming up constantly for discussion, and with the most interesting developments taking place all over the country, it is perfectly evident that more space is needed for articles and news items, and for discussions on current problems, in both teaching and administration in nursing schools. Without some such common meeting ground, the superintendents, teachers and supervisors of our more than 600 nursing schools cannot keep in close touch with one another and cannot work together for the things we are all struggling to accomplish.

At the request of the National League of Nursing Education, the *Journal* Board has agreed to extend somewhat, the present Department of Nursing Education, and to put it under the general charge of the League. As soon as possible, a special editor will be appointed who will be able to give a much larger share of her time to the development of the department. In the meantime, it is hoped that the local state leagues and the national league will keep the temporary editor of the Department constantly informed of their activities, and that all of our readers who are interested in nursing education, will help by sending in news of important developments in their own parts of the country or elsewhere.

Although student government has been discussed recently in the *Journal*, it is believed that the following paper written by the principal of one of our representative nursing schools, as a result of her own practical experience with student government, will be found to be a distinct and helpful contribution to this much-debated subject.

STUDENT SELF GOVERNMENT IN SCHOOLS OF NURSING

By LOUISE M. POWELL, R.N.

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Why the Present System Is Inadequate. There is no question to-day that is of more vital interest to those in charge of schools of nursing than the question of student self government. This is especially true of those who have made some progress in their fight for educational standards. The very fact that the schools which have

succeeded in setting high educational standards are attracting college women and thinking women from other fields, notably the field of teaching, makes it necessary that these schools should begin to consider what can be done to hold these women who have come to them. Most assuredly the present system of government in our schools does not appeal to this type of student. The system of government which is practised in a majority of our schools to-day has come down to us from the early days of our existence as training schools. In 1872, in several places, a few wise physicians and lay women saw the need for radical reform in the nursing system of our large hospitals. They decided to try to replace the untrained, uneducated, oftentimes degraded women who were caring for the sick poor, by young women of good character and of some education, who should be instructed and carefully supervised in their work. To persuade those in charge of hospitals at that time that any change was necessary, demanded infinite tact and unlimited patience. Permission for a trial was finally reluctantly granted. The women who were replaced, some of them faithful, all of them hard-working, did not command the respect of either physicians or patients. When this new group of respectable, and in many cases, refined and well-educated women came into these surroundings, it was imperative that they be subjected to very rigid discipline for their own protection. Our hospitals have changed, conditions have changed, and we must change to meet the new conditions.

Now what is the present system of government in these schools? I think I state the facts correctly when I say that in the large majority of schools of nursing to-day, the rules of conduct, not only in the hospital, but outside, are made by the head of the school, and are imposed on the student. These rules cover such things as hours of rising and retiring, late permits, order of rooms, receiving of visitors, (especially men) and social intercourse between nurses and physicians. In many places, the social activities of the students are entirely planned and carried out by those in authority. The breaking of these rules, if the student is caught, results in various degrees of punishment, sometimes in the just dismissal of a student from the school.

A thing one is arbitrarily forbidden to do looks very attractive. When one is blamed only if one is caught, it is rather exciting to see how often one can do the thing and escape detection. Take, for example, our old familiar friend, the rule that there shall be no social intercourse between nurses and doctors except when the school gives a formal party to which both are invited. Does not everyone notice how well these two groups seem to know each other when they meet?

If this rule cannot be enforced, then why make it? I feel very strongly that the imposing upon students of rules, in the making of which they have no voice, and in the enforcing of which they have no responsibility, is a weakness in the government in our schools of nursing, which can only be overcome by the introduction of a well-planned system of student self government.

What Is Student Self Government and How Does It Work in Other Types of Schools? In attempting to devise such a system, we can get a great deal of assistance by following the plans already in force in other schools. Let us look into the origin of student self government, and see why it has been adopted.

Our democratic form of government demands, if it is to be effective, that *somewhere* the people shall be given practise in helping to govern themselves. Possibly the indifference and ignorance of the masses of people in our country concerning public affairs may be attributed to the fact that our young people are not given a right conception of what self government is. In fact, I think much of the dishonesty in our political life is attributable to the same cause. In a democracy we have a very dangerous state of affairs when the masses of the people, through ignorance or lack of education, have a distorted conception of government for and by the people.

In recent years student self government has been introduced into many schools of all grades in different parts of the country. The National Education Association has appointed a self government committee, with an office in New York City. The committee is encouraging the spread of this movement, by sending out literature and experts to assist those who desire to introduce it. Mr. William R. George is a member of this committee, also Mrs. Helen Hartley Jenkins, who is well known to nurses.

Probably the first attempt at self government by the young was made by Mr. William R. George at Freeville, N. Y., in what was called the George Junior Republic. This first experiment was made with delinquent children who had been through the courts. In 1895, Mr. George conceived the idea that, if young people were allowed a hand in the making and enforcing of their own laws of conduct, they would develop character. He began in a small way in the city, but soon moved into the country. The Republic Association bought two hundred acres of farming land, and established a republic in miniature. Officers were elected by the young people. Work which must measure up to a fixed standard was demanded of every one; no idlers were tolerated. The main object of the whole scheme was to develop self-control. The community continues to prosper and is achieving many of the things it set out to do.

The "honor system" of the University of Virginia is an example of another system of self government among older men. It has been enforced by the students for many years. In this institution where the authorities have no control over the students outside the classroom, it is an absolute necessity. Possibly the system would be strengthened if there were a chance for more faculty coöperation.

What then are the principles that underlie all student self government? As "our aims may be said to measure our principles"¹ let me state the aims that such a system is intended to subserve. The aims are, to secure better discipline² and more effective training for citizenship; to develop character and a sense of real justice; and to make the school more attractive.³

Student self government, as has been said before, has been introduced very successfully into many high schools all over the country. The points laid down as essential for its adoption in this type of school are that the students must desire to have it and must understand their responsibility; that the faculty must be not only sympathetic and ready to coöperate, but also willing to exercise an invisible supervision. That there should be faculty coöperation and supervision, is conceded to be very necessary, owing to the limited experience of boys and girls, and to their need of guidance and direction by their elders. In high schools all social activities,—study hour, assembly, conduct in the school building and on the playground,—are under student control. In addition to this, in many places the qualities of character and the spirit developed in the school have been a powerful influence in the neighborhood surrounding the school. Streets have been cleaned up and bad conditions in tenement houses have been bettered as a result of the interest taken in them by the students.

The organization is effected by the students, with the assistance of some members of the faculty; a constitution is drawn up and adopted by the students; and later, officers are elected. After the officers are installed (and this should be made a real ceremony), the organization should promptly start to work. The names of officers and their number vary with the organization.

In the many schools in which self government by the students has been tried, results have been reported as follows: The development

¹ "Some Problems of Pupil Self-Government." I. Edwin Goldwasser, p. 5.

² I am thinking of discipline as defined by a principal of one of the New York schools. "Real discipline," he says, "is the effective guiding of energy towards a realization, that leads to self development and social service."

³ I. Edwin Goldwasser, "Some Problems of Pupil Self-government," pp. 5-15.

in the students of a deeper sense of personal responsibility; the creation of greater respect for authority; the stimulating of a closer sympathy between student and teacher; the development of a strong spirit of coöperation; and the beginning of a training for citizenship. If moral character is built by the exercise of judgment and self-control,¹ and if student self government helps to develop self-control, should we not use it, and may we not expect great results?

Student self government differs in some respects in the college from that which we have seen in the high school. To begin with, though the organization in the college is very similar to that of the high school, the students in college are much more mature. Student self government, as we see it in our colleges to-day, inculcates a wholesome respect for the upper classmen, or seniors. When the younger students feel there is something to attain in becoming a senior, their ambition is stimulated, and they are furnished with an incentive to good work. This is rather more marked in the college than in the high school. Self government in college should help to create a public opinion that will demand of the student the best in conduct and scholarship; it should support and strengthen the weaker members; it should make its members feel that they are the school, and that what reflects on it, is detrimental to them.

I believe it is just as important to have faculty coöperation in the college as it is in the schools for younger students. When students and faculty work out their problems in conference, each gets the other's point of view; and both gain a sympathy and an understanding that make for harmony. If student self government in a college does not result in producing a democratic, resourceful, self-reliant, thinking body of men and women, I should consider the system a failure.

Aims of Student Government in Nursing Schools. Now apply these principles of student self government to schools of nursing. Do the women of these schools differ from the women in college? Probably the greatest difference is in the matter of preliminary educational preparation. A group, in almost any school of nursing, will be made up of college graduates, women with normal training, or with one or more years of college work, high school graduates, women who have been educated in private schools and by travel. However, in many schools at present, there is a rather large group of women who have had little preliminary education. This difference in amount of education gives us a group varied, also, as to age. On the other hand, there is a decided advantage in having students who, for the

¹ "College Spirit and Student Control," School and Society—1, pp. 552-556.

most part, have chosen their work after much thought, many times in the face of strong opposition on the part of family and friends. This, undoubtedly, produces a body of serious-minded, thoughtful women. I feel sure that the motive of the majority of them in taking up this work is a desire to be of service to humanity. Notice that I say in the majority of cases. There are other, and sometimes less worthy motives, but from a long experience, I would expect the woman who comes into the school thoughtlessly, to drop out when confronted with the really trying experiences which every nurse must face. The work of the student in the school of nursing is real work. Her laboratory is filled, not with test-tubes, but with human beings of many types of character. She is seeing life at its best and at its worst, seeing human beings in the happiest moments of life and in the bitterest. There is no more serious work than that which carries responsibility for the lives of others. This responsibility rests, oftentimes, as surely in the hands of the nurse as in those of the physician. If ever a group of women needed to be developed into resourceful, self reliant, thinking beings, it surely is the body of women you are fitting to be nurses. If ever women needed to be trained to feel a deep sense of personal responsibility, to cultivate self-control and the spirit of coöperation, it is the women in our training schools.

Does this group need to be trained for citizenship? Think for a moment of the wide field of public health nursing that is awaiting the properly trained woman, and of what the nurse is called upon to do in this field. The nurse who does not know in what good citizenship consists, or how to be a good citizen herself, is unfitted to do her part in training for good citizenship the boys and girls who come to her in the schools, in the club, and in the clinic. Not only the nurse, but every woman at the present time needs all the practice she can get in self government, as a means of preparation for intelligent, interested citizenship. Our educated, thinking women must be prepared to wield through the franchise, an influence on political life that will be felt and will be acknowledged as worth while. In no better way can we give our nurses this practice than by allowing them a share in the government of one department of an institution, which deals with human problems in infinite variety, a modern hospital.

What of the aim of better discipline,—do we need this? In my opinion the work of the nurse, well done, is a very effective form of discipline. I believe the students themselves will take care of the whole question of regulations as to hours of rest and recreation, if we can once show them how the quality of their work depends on their physical condition, and how the demand of their work on nerves

and muscles makes necessary a definite amount of rest. A body of students, given the responsibility of making those regulations, will be quick to enforce them; and because they are made by the students, there will be fewer infractions. Is not the reason for most of our regulations, the keeping of our nurses in such physical and mental condition that they may render the best service to the public, and may get from their training the things which will make them most efficient and useful members of their profession? Then let us put upon them the responsibility of securing these things.

A student certainly gets a keener appreciation of the necessity for government by taking part in it. When the breaking of rules is to be dealt with, if she has learned to look at all sides of the question, a just sentence is almost certain to be imposed. There is nothing our nurses need as much as to develop, by means of their training, a character that will mark them, wherever they are, as broad minded, clear thinking, public spirited members of a community. Some of these qualities, I feel sure, will be gained by a system of self government.

How to Introduce the New System. Suppose we concede that student self government would be of value in the training of our students in schools of nursing, then how shall we go about introducing it? A most important consideration is to have your faculty in sympathy with the plan. If you have on your faculty a strong, valuable woman, trained under the old system, who feels that the school will go to pieces if this power is put into the hands of students, direct all your energies toward converting this individual to your point of view. At least get her to agree to give it a fair trial. The college woman on your faculty will usually be in sympathy with the plan. No less important is the attitude of the students. Wait patiently until a desire for it is manifest among them, until they request it. Do not force it on them. Talk with your strongest women, and make them see that almost the whole success of the plan will depend on the choice of leaders, that they must have strong as well as popular leaders.

Now what activities can be given over to the control of the students? Without any doubt, the activities that take place in the home,—social functions, order and good conduct in the home; the behavior of the students in public, stimulation of interest in the school among outsiders, and, if the school is connected with a university, the coöperation of the student organization with other university activities. I go so far as to feel that in some cases in the hospital, where routine orders are neglected or mistakes are made, conference with the student council can be both helpful and

illuminating. In this way we may develop a strong public opinion concerning these things among the students, an opinion that will make them think twice before they will dare to disregard principles subscribed to by the other students.

What part, you may ask, are the head of the school and the governing board to take in this government? If the head of the school goes about it in the right way, she can become a very important adjunct; she can make her influence very strongly felt; she can make her advice and counsel very much to be desired. She and the board (called training school committee in many places) should speak the final word in any serious matter that arises. They should constitute a body of final appeal, over and above the student council and the faculty advisory committee. The head of the school should be a member, "ex officio," of the student council.

Practical Results. In schools of nursing with university affiliation I should say this form of government is a necessity. In justice to the students, they ought to be allowed to participate in the general self government association. In other schools I feel sure the morale of the student would be improved, the work would be better, and the students would be happier, thus fulfilling the last aim laid down—that of making the school more attractive.

For almost a year, a system of student self government has been in practice in the school of which I have charge. It was requested by the students and it has been carried on with enthusiasm. It was inaugurated at the beginning of a year filled with hard and trying experiences. Whether the wonderful spirit the nurses showed in meeting these conditions was due to their feeling that they were an important part of the institution, and thus must measure up to their responsibilities, I do not know—but I suspect it helped.

I hope to see the day when every school which undertakes to train nurses will take this means of developing in their students "an active, willing participation in the responsibilities of the group, which is the deepest demand of our democracy."¹

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN NURSING EDUCATION

Mlle. Matter and Mlle. Durlleman, two French nurses who have been visiting in America during the last few months, will leave soon for Lille, France, where they expect to establish a new nursing school on modern lines. Both are graduates of the Nightingale School at Bordeaux, and have had wide experience in nursing work.

While in New York they have been taking courses as guests of the Department of Nursing and Health, Teachers College, and have visited all the leading

¹"Moral Values in Pupil Self-government,"—National Education Association, 1913; pp. 41-45.

hospitals, and public health organizations where they have been cordially welcomed. They have also made a round of several American cities, and feel that they are returning with many valuable ideas which they hope to apply in their new school.

All those who have had the great pleasure of meeting the French nurses here will watch with much interest the growth of this new child of the Nightingale School at Bordeaux, in which we all feel now that we have a special share.

A very important announcement has recently come from the department of nursing of Leland Stanford University. A course for instructors is to be opened next year under Maud Muse, who is instructor in the Lane School connected with the University. Students will do a good deal of observation work during the first half year and will also take certain fundamental teaching subjects in the University. During the second term they will assist in the actual teaching under the supervision of Miss Muse and other instructors. With the present acute scarcity of instructors, all such efforts to train capable nurses for this work, should be welcomed and encouraged in every possible way.

The eight-hour day is going ahead. Recent reports to the Committee on Education, from about 1,000 training schools throughout the country, show that a very great effort is being made to reduce the present long hours of duty. The main difficulty is the scarcity of applicants, but as has been pointed out many times, it is useless to postpone the introduction of shorter hours in the hope of securing more applicants, because this condition itself is due in a large measure, to the heavy work and the long hours which have existed so long in most nursing schools. A summary of these statistics on the eight-hour day will be prepared as soon as the reports are all in.

It is evident from these reports that hospital helpers are being used more and more, to do much of the routine ward work and so relieve student nurses for the actual care of sick patients.

Mount Sinai Nursing School, New York City, has recently received a gift of \$50,000 from Mr. Lillienthal in memory of his father. This endowment is to be used for educational purposes and for the health and welfare of the students in the Nursing School.

In addition to the generous scholarships awarded to service nurses by the American Red Cross, provision has been made to give disabled nurses the same benefits of re-education through the Federal Board of Vocational Education, which disabled and handicapped men from the Army and Navy enjoy. The nurse is allowed to choose the field in which she wishes further training and if this is approved by physicians and advisers, she is sent to the school or college where such training may be best obtained, her expenses (tuition fees, books, etc.) are paid by the Board and she receives \$80 per month in addition for maintenance. The length of the training varies from a few months to a year or more. A number of nurses who are unable to return to private work, find it possible in this way to fit themselves for teaching and other branches of nursing or for laboratory or office work.

Some of the states are offering educational privileges to nurses and men who have been in the service, even when they are not in any way disabled. When the state institutions do not provide the training desired, the student's fees, up to a certain limit, are paid in the institution he or she selects.